

MYSTICISM AND REVOLUTION
CONVERSATIONS WITH ERNESTO CARDENAL

A Professional Project
Presented To the Faculty of the
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Doctor of Ministry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project is to explore the concepts of mysticism and revolution to discover how extensive is the common ground between them. The study is also made with an eye to the areas outside the common territory which may or may not be integrated into a "contemplative - revolutionary" way of life. The observation prompting this study is the existence of individuals in whom the traditions of contemplation and revolution have come together. My desire is to understand this life, specifically in the Christian tradition.

The methods of study employed are: library research; a personal interview with Father Ernesto Cardenal, contemplative and revolutionary; and visits to a Benedictine Monastery for reflection and research. This monastic community was chosen because Cardenal spent two years with the Benedictines.

Conclusions drawn from the study are that: 1) a great disservice is done in the Christian community by continuing to hold these two concepts apart; 2) a valuable critique is made both for traditional understandings of these two modes of life and for current understandings of faithful Christian living; and 3) a rich and faithful future lies ahead as we continue to understand the relationship between contemplation and revolution and its implications for the Christian life.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Addressed By The Project

One of the problems facing the church today is that we hold concepts of mysticism and revolution which appear to be mutually exclusive. By continuing to hold these two apart, we not only misunderstand the deeper meanings of each but also lose almost entirely the unique mode of life which is possible when they are joined.

Importance Of The Problem

This problem is important because although the church has not understood mysticism and revolution to be compatible, there have been individuals in whom these two modes of life have come together. The actualization of this integration challenges the adequacy of our traditional views. It can be seen that when these two modes do merge in a single person, great human, spiritual and political power is released. This is evident in the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Dom Helder Camara, Thomas Merton and Ernesto Cardenal--each knowing both a contemplative and a revolutionary life.

This observation leads to questions which are less theoretical than practical, but not therefore insignificant. Each of these traditions has brought tremendous richness to the Christian life. And one might ask whether the new

life which is created through their union might not bring a valuable critique to the traditional views of each. Might not this new mode of life be viable for the church today? And might not the existence of this mode be seen as a valuable critique of our more dominant assumptions and expectations for Christian living?

The purpose of this project is to explore this problem in the following ways. First we will present a description both of the contemplative and of the revolutionary life. Then we will ask about the possibility of their integration. Third will be a discussion of the problems encountered when they do merge. And finally we will evaluate the insight which may result from understanding the interdependence of the two.

Thesis

Henry Nouwen, in his book, Pray To Live, made the following statement: "Merton (had an) intuition that contemplation and revolution are two forms of radicalism which should never be separated."¹ This project will attempt to answer why that may be so. My thesis is that the nature of the view of reality which they share, and the nature of their relationships to and within that reality are compatible. Each mode has a vision of the Kingdom of God which

¹Henri J. M. Nouwen, Pray To Live (Notre Dame: Fides, 1972), p. 4.

enhances the other, and both live eschatologically. Both the contemplative and the revolutionary find themselves, therefore, on the margins of society, leaving behind the main stream values of the dominant group in favor of another social and spiritual order. As is evident in those persons who are both mystic and revolutionary, the union of these two modes creates a powerfully faithful life.

The studies in contemplation and revolution will be descriptive, not theoretical. In them, I will describe two modes of life as they have been observed and described by others. But my thesis statements, the synthesis in Chapter Four, and the conclusions are based on my own observations and reflections.

Definition of Major Terms

Three major terms are used throughout this project: mysticism, contemplation and revolution. Mysticism and contemplation are used interchangeably. All three of these terms will be defined more thoroughly in the following two chapters. Briefly, mysticism and contemplation signify a process of seeking and finding union with God. A social revolution is a drastic change in the fundamental principles of a government. This change is brought about by the governed.

Work Previously Done In The Field

Much has been written within the field of contemplation and within the field of revolution. However, very

little has been written tying these two modes together. There are growing discussions of revolution and theology, and revolution and Christianity, but very few discussions concerning the specific relationship of revolution and contemplation. By bringing these two modes together, I hope to add to previous inquiry, research of two forms of radical faith which, in my opinion, never should be separated.

Scope and Limitation Of The Project

In this project I intend to be responsible for a description of the characteristics of contemplation and of the contemplative life by looking at various observations and examples. I will not present an historical overview of the various forms of contemplation or of contemplatives.

I also intend to be responsible for a discussion of the characteristics of revolution and the revolutionary life, but not for an analysis of violence as a specific aspect of revolution or any particular revolution.

I will, however, make a presentation of the Nicaraguan revolution as a background for the interview with Father Ernesto Cardenal. I have chosen Cardenal as a case study for this work because he has been both revolutionary and contemplative. I intend to test out my thesis in his case.

Procedure For Integration

In this project I will integrate the classical discipline of Christian Spirituality and the practical discipline of Christian Social Ethics. Their meeting place for the purpose of this work is the relationship of mysticism and revolution. The methods of study will include library research, personal visits to a Benedictine monastery for retreat and research, and travel to Nicaragua for an interview with Father Ernesto Cardenal, now Minister of Culture for that country.

Description Of The Chapter Outline

After an introductory chapter, three questions will be explored in chapter two: What is contemplation within the more general context of prayer; What are the characteristics of the contemplative life; and, for the contemplative, What is the Reality within which existence is understood and tested. I will close with a section on "contemplation in action."

Chapter three will also address questions of revolutionary life and reality. Descriptions will be given highlighting unique qualities of each. A context of "general social change" will be created within which we will better understand the significance of radical revolutionary change.

In chapter four, observations of qualities and commitments shared by contemplatives and revolutionaries

will be made. Here also will be presented problem areas and unique contributions of each.

Chapter five will include a short review of the revolution in Nicaragua, a biographical sketch of Cardenal, the interview itself and a presentation of additional questions which were raised as a result of the interview and experience in Nicaragua.

Chapter six will review the project and draw conclusions with regard to the impact of this work on Christian ministry and the relevance of the findings for the church in the United States today.

Basic Bibliography

Within the field of contemplation, major authors consulted for this work are Ernesto Cardenal, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, Thomas Merton, Julian of Norwich, and Teresa of Avila, all writing from their own contemplative experiences. Merton also writes as an observer of the contemplative life. Also consulted is the exhaustive research of Evelyn Underhill on mysticism.

Within the field of revolution, major authors consulted have been Ernesto Cardenal, Mahatma Gandhi, and Camillo Torres who write from their unique experiences within revolutionary movements. Also consulted is the work of John Gunneman as a chronicler of revolution. A complete bibliography will appear at the conclusion of this project.

CHAPTER II

CONTEMPLATION AND THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

In this chapter we will describe the phenomenon of contemplation and the elements of the contemplative life for the purpose of understanding what is unique and significant in this mode of living. The illustrative material has been chosen with an eye for exposition. It is hoped that it will enhance and focus the picture of the contemplative which is being presented.

The purpose of the chapter is to build a foundation upon which the following discussions of the problem may be formed. Primarily this will be accomplished in the summary of the chapter, after a full description has been made and I am able to highlight those constitutive elements of the contemplative life which have parallels or relationships in the life of the revolutionary. Thus this chapter is an introduction to the possibilities seen for the contemplative-revolutionary life, not an extended discussion of the problem as a whole.

The contemplative has nothing to tell you except to reassure you and say that if you dare to penetrate your own silence and dare to advance without fear into the solitude of your own heart, and risk the sharing of that solitude with the lonely other who seeks God through you and with you, then you will truly recover the light and the capacity to understand what is beyond explanations because it is too close to be explained; it is the intimate union in the depths of your own heart, of God's spirit and your own secret inmost self, so that you and He are in all truth One Spirit.¹

¹Thomas Merton, A Letter To The Holy See, dated

In undertaking to write this project, I will be attempting to describe from without what many have said can only be understood from within. The chroniclers of mysticism have confessed that, in fact, only mystics can write about mysticism. Fortunately, many have done so; thus I am able to draw from their own writings as well as those of the chroniclers.

How do we begin then, to understand or describe mysticism and contemplation. The word "mystica" found its way into Christian usage in the sixth century, but has been widely used only since the ninth. Before that time, the word used to describe this discipline and moment was "contemplatio" which means "looking at" or "gazing at".² Today the word contemplation is more widely used than mysticism. However, both are being used in the Christian community.

Contemplation has been called simply "union with God". Though using an exercise of the entire self, the contemplative seeks and finds communion with the Divine in the innermost depth of the soul. The union is the fruit of long, tender and conscious focusing on the Holy. The life of a contemplative is a life of prayer lived by few. Here an important question arises. But doesn't everybody pray?

A preliminary word about prayer must be made.

"Prayer" encompasses a wide range of disciplines and com-

1967, cited by Henri J.M. Nouwen, Pray To Live (Notre Dame: Fides, 1972), p. 42.

²William Johnston, The Inner Eye of Love (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 24.

munications. It is perhaps best understood as a generic term. Traditionally there are three types of prayer. Most common to Christianity is vocal prayer. The other two are meditative prayer and contemplative prayer.

I am indebted to a booklet by Father Borst for the following information on these three types of prayer.³

"Vocal prayer" may actually be audible or it may be silent. Its significance is that it is a prayer of words. It may take the form of a conversation with the Divine, or it may be a spiritual confession, simply a conscious awareness of one's perceived state of being in the presence of the Holy. Vocal prayer may be the prayer of an individual or of a congregation.⁴ Its importance is that it is a prayer of words.

The second type of prayer is meditative prayer. Here the lips are silent. This is a prayer of the imagination. It is a time of reflection. The reflection may be on a biblical passage, an inspirational thought or reading, wisdom from the saints, or some part of creation. The uniqueness which sets meditative prayer apart from other modes of prayer is that while meditating, words are stilled and the imagination is engaged with the spirit.

³James Borst, A Method Of Contemplative Prayer (Bombay: R. B. Pinto, Asian Trading Corporation, 1973), p. 36.

⁴Before continuing, I must note that the labels used here, although traditional, are not static. Each type of prayer may find itself referred to differently in various times and places. What is important to understand is that three distinct types of prayer are being described, though they may be known by a variety of names.

The third type of prayer is contemplative prayer. While in contemplation, the lips are silent, the imagination is stilled and one dwells in union with God.

When your tongue is silent, you can rest in the silence of the forest. When your imagination is silent, the forest speaks to you, tells you of its unreality and of the Reality of God. But when your mind is silent, then the forest suddenly becomes magnificently real and blazes transparently with the Reality of God: for now I know that the Creation which first seems to reveal Him, in concepts, then seems to hide Him, by the same concepts, finally is revealed in Him, in the Holy Spirit: and we who are in God find ourselves united in Him, with all that springs from Him. This is prayer, and this is glory!⁵

The difference between contemplative prayer and vocal prayer may also be likened to that between a conversation with a good friend and making love with one's beloved. Contemplative prayer has been referred to as unitive prayer and the language used by the mystic to describe the experience of contemplation is also often used to describe the most beautiful in sexual life.

Many mystics have found passages in the Song of Solomon to express well what they have experienced in the mystical moment. Chapter 5 vss. 2-5 are often found in their reflections:

I slept, but my heart was awake.
Hark! my beloved is knocking.
"Open to me, my sister, my love,
my dove, my perfect one:
for my head is wet with dew,
my locks with the drops of the
night."
I had put off my garment,
how could I put it on?
I had bathed my feet,
how could I soil them?

⁵Thomas Merton, The Sign of Jonas (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953), p. 343.

My beloved put his hand to the
 latch,
 and my heart was thrilled within
 me.
 I arose to open to my beloved,
 and my hands dripped with myrrh,
 my fingers with liquid myrrh,
 upon the handles of the bolt.⁶

These are the kinds of descriptions given of contemplative prayer by those living contemplative lives. Yes, everyone can pray. Contemplatives pray in all three modes. However, not everyone is a contemplative.

The contemplative life is a life unique, begun with a special desire, marked by strong discipline and lived in utter simplicity. Indeed, the contemplative may often "leave" the world, to better live the life of contemplation. Perhaps a more accurate reading would be that the contemplative often "lets go" of the world to better live the contemplative life.

This letting go may take the form of living in a hermitage, monastery or place apart. Geography may vary. Spirit does not. The recognized need is for a life of external simplicity, that room may be made for complex inner workings to mature. I take an illustration from Metropolitan Anthony Bloom.

See this watch in my hand. You may say that I have it. But as long as I hold on to it, I have lost the use of my hand, and to some extent my wrist, and even my arm... only to regain the use when I let go of the watch...⁷

⁶Song of Solomon 5:2-5.

⁷"Meditation and Action", a filmed conversation between Maxie Dunnam and Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, c. 1975-1980.

Contemplative prayer, say the contemplatives, requires a life of simplicity. It is the good soil in which the contemplative life may take root and grow, making preparation for union with God.

Thus far, initial parameters have been drawn for our understanding of mysticism or contemplation within the contexts of prayer and simplicity. A very general context has been discussed in which the mystical relationship happens. However, I must note that we have begun a discussion of the relationship without describing the lives of the participants, which may be analogous to discussing a handshake without knowing hands. Were we to begin such a discussion of "handshaking" we would only know that a handshake is something about one thing enveloping another, intertwining, warming, feeling, sensing presence and perhaps security and strength, but we would know nothing of the two entities doing this thing.

For the mystic, the object of mysticism is clearly and passionately God. The singular devotion of the contemplative is the spiritual quest for God, known as person and experienced as both transcendent and immanent. The reason for being, for the mystic, is to bring one's own life consciously into the presence of the Holy, to live as a "guest of the Holy".⁸ Nothing brings satisfaction or fulfillment for the Christian contemplative but a transformed life

⁸Harold R. Johnson, Becoming A Guest Of The Holy (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1978), pp. 6-8.

which allows the indwelling of Christ and contemplative. This may be difficult for the non-mystic to understand, so it is said that,

We must pull down our own card houses--descend, as the mystics say, into nothingness--and examine for ourselves the 'foundation of all possible human experience' before we are in a position to understand the knowledge and experience of...mystics.⁹

One must travel an intense inward journey to arrive at this inner foundation place. In the course of my own journey a myriad of questions has occurred to me with regard to this place. What are the inner depths through which one must pass? Are the depths of the psyche the soul? Or is the soul something "completely other"? Where (what?) is the inner place in which the Divine may find repose?

There seem to be no definitive answers. Rather, there are simple and beautiful statements of a recognition that there are indeed undefined depths within the human personality, and that beyond the final depth which "at the touch of passion...flies open" lives the soul.¹⁰

Who then is the one who so eagerly makes this journey? The desire and passion is of the mystic.

It is the lover, the poet, the mourner, the convert, who shares for a moment the mystic's privilege of lifting that Veil of Isis which science handles so helplessly...The heart, eager and restless goes out into the unknown and brings home...'fresh food for thought'.¹¹

⁹Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (New York: Dutton, 1961), p. 4.

¹⁰Underhill, p. 48.

¹¹Underhill, p. 48.

The act of contemplation has been called a "psychic gateway"¹² for the mystic. Passing through this gateway, the mystic is in a process of intentionally opening the boundaries between one level of consciousness and another.

By travelling through these boundaries, the mystic enters the unique mode of consciousness and encounter with Reality which, according to Underhill is universal and "peculiar to no race or creed."¹³

What is this consciousness which is characteristic of the mystic? Though definition eludes, some description is available.

It is the sense which, in the words of the "Theologia Germanica", has "the power of seeing into eternity", the "mysterious eye of the soul" by which St. Augustine saw "the light that never changes". It is, says Al Ghazzali, a Persian mystic of the eleventh century "like an immediate perception, as if one touched its object with one's hand." In the words of his great Christian successor, St. Bernard, "it may be defined as the soul's true unerring intuition, the unhesitating apprehension of truth" which "simple vision of truth", says St. Thomas Aquinas, "ends in a movement of desire."¹⁴

Underhill's discussion of this special consciousness continues. Here, the poetry of her own description encourages continuing quest,

(The soul) it seems, has certain tentacles which, once she learns to uncurl them, will stretch sensitive fingers far beyond that limiting envelope in which her normal consciousness is contained...The fully developed and completely conscious human soul can open as an anemone does and know the ocean in which she is bathed. This act, this condition, of consciousness in which barriers are obliterated, the absolute flows in on us, and we (rush) out to its embrace, is the true mystical state.¹⁵

¹²Underhill, p. 49.

¹³Underhill, p. 49.

¹⁴Underhill, p. 50.

¹⁵Underhill, p. 53.

The nature of this special consciousness, so identified with the mystic mode has points of reference which we can identify as familiar. Those of us living within the "limiting envelope" of normal consciousness do recognize feeling, thought and will. And we have some acquaintance with their influences on our lives. William Law writes:

There is a root or depth in thee from whence all these faculties come...as lines from a centre, or as branches from the body of a tree. This depth is the unity, the Eternity, I had almost said the infinity of the soul, for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it, or give it any rest, but the infinity of God.¹⁶

Beyond the final boundary in the inward journey is the discovery of the channel of life. Here, the mystic would say, is our "link with Reality". In the innermost depth of the human spirit we discover the passageway to the "external" universe and all that is in it. Within this depth the contemplative finds the power by which s/he is able to move into the unique way of life which is known by the contemplative.

Within this life, the mystic must so order all aspects of existence (internal and external), that the Divine becomes the dominant factor in all of living. Quite obviously if this reordering does not happen, it will not be so, which is to say, some other interest will become the organizing principle for life, and living will find its still point in that other center. The contemplative life is a life of discipline, ever creating time and place for

¹⁶William Law, Liberal and Mystical Writings, p. 14 as cited in Underhill, p. 52.

encounter with the Holy. Traditional monastic discipline allows for five times of community prayer each day:

- 6:00 A.M. Morning Vigil with the sunrise and the Office of Readings
- 7:30 Lauds--morning prayer prior to breakfast which follows at 8:00. The work of the morning then begins.
- 12:00 The Conventual Mass which is followed by lunch and the work of the afternoon.
- 6:00 P.M. Vespers--evening prayer which is followed by dinner at 6:30.
- 8:30 Compline--night prayer, after which is observed the Great Silence until after breakfast the following morning.¹⁷

The living of each day is organized around reunions with God. Consequently the contemplative experiences life in a uniquely different way, and sees and evaluates the world from a point of view unattainable in the secular world. This point of view is beyond the secular only because passages to it are not opened within that realm.

For the contemplative, prayer and style of living each nourish the other. They cannot be separated. God is the origin, defining thread and destiny of life. To separate is to unravel at your own risk!

The hour of silent prayer must be important to you in relation to your whole life as a Christian...

You must endeavour to express your continued surrender by moving away from violence to non-violent and peaceful ways, from any kind of falsehood to utter truthfulness and inner harmony, from self-assertion to great sensitivity to the needs, rights and feelings of

¹⁷"No Hunting Except for Peace" (Pamphlet available through St. Andrew's Priory, Valyermo, California)

others...from possessiveness and greed to give and share and a preference for soberness.

In other words, you must resolutely set your face against the tendencies which grieve the Spirit and kill the soul: pride and prestige, anger and violence...and greed.¹⁸

Here emerges a testing principle for life: how faithfully does one live one's conception of the Spirit? How well do prayer and style of living dovetail?

And for the observer, standing perhaps a few paces from this way of life? What definitive characteristics may help us identify and test what we see? Evelyn Underhill, in her exhaustive research has discovered five signposts which help the seeker recognize the territory of mysticism. Together, they do enable the observer to see more clearly into the world of the contemplative.

- 1.) Mysticism is practical, not theoretical...over and over again the great mystics tell us, not how they speculated, but how they acted...The paradoxical "quiet" of the contemplative is but the outward stillness essential to inward work.
- 2.) Mysticism is an entirely spiritual activity...Though he will spend himself unceasingly for other men, become an "agent of the Eternal Goodness", he is destitute of supersensual ambitions and craves no occult knowledge or power.
- 3.) The business and method of Mysticism is Love...Here is one of the distinctive notes of true mysticism...It is the eager, outgoing activity whose driving power is generous love, not the absorbent indrawing activity which arrives only from new knowledge.
- 4.) Mysticism entails a definite psychological experience...That is to say, it shows itself not merely as an attitude of mind and heart, but as a form of organic life. It involves the organizing of the whole self, conscious and unconscious...The mystics are emphatic in

¹⁸Borst, p. 24.

their statement that spiritual desires are useless unless they initiate this costly movement of the whole self towards the Real.

- 5.) True mysticism is never self-seeking...As a corollary to these four rules, it is perhaps well to reiterate this statement.¹⁹

Practical, spiritual, loving, organized into an organic whole centered on what is Real, this is the Life of the mystic. Perhaps one could say that there are two unique though not distinct sides to the mystical life, each needing energy from the other for continued growth. First, manifest in the mystic is the consciousness of the Holy and the second is the "inward transmutation to which that consciousness compels the mystic in order...that he may take his place within the order of Reality."²⁰

Before looking at one particular expression of mysticism, a final word about the mystic personality in general, again from Underhill. More than the receptive apprehension of God, she notes, is needed to make a mystic. This consciousness must happen within a person who has:

1. an appropriate psychological make-up
2. a nature capable of extraordinary concentration
3. an exceptional moral sensitivity, and
4. a nervous organization of the artistic type.²¹

At this point I will leave the general discussion of Contemplation, and move to a short description of one particular manifestation of contemplation, contemplation in action.

From generation to generation, the mystic or contemplative life has been unfolding. There have been those in

¹⁹Underhill, pp. 81-92.

²⁰Underhill, p. 90.

²¹Underhill, p. 91.

every time and place who have known the yearning of the depth within to be touched and filled by eternity. Often this yearning has found its resolve in the life of the monastery, with days devoted to silence, solitude, the recitation of the Divine Office, the reading of scripture, and the pursuit of wisdom and common tasks. However, there have also been other manifestations of the contemplative life.

Thomas Aquinas, himself a Dominican friar, has more esteem for action as it appears in what he calls the mixed life...This is the more perfect life...because it is better for the candle to give light than just to burn, and ...this mixed life was chosen by Jesus Christ--who taught and preached and healed and lived an active life.²²

This "mixed life" of desire, reflection and action is costly. It is costly both in the East and the West. Mahatma Gandhi, a contemplative in action spoke these words in the midst of his religious, political life:

Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see him in his creation and to be one with it...If I could persuade myself that I could find him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find him apart from humanity.²³

A second illustration, also from India, but this time Christian, is taken from a conversation between Mother Teresa and one of her sisters.

"During the mass," I said, "you saw that the priest touched the body of Christ with great love and tenderness. When you touch the poor today, you too will be

²²Johnston, p. 25.

²³M.K. Gandhi from his periodical Harijan as cited in Johnston, p. 26.

touching the body of Christ. Give them that same love and tenderness." When they returned several hours later, the new sister came up to me, her face shining with joy, "I have been touching the body of Christ for three hours," she said. I asked her what she had done. "Just as we arrived, the sister brought in a man covered with maggots. He had been picked up from a drain. I have been taking care of him. I have been touching Christ. I knew it was him" she said.²⁴

This is the contemplative life: practical, spiritual, loving, organized into an organic whole centered on what is Real.

Johnston notes four outstanding features of the life of contemplation in action. I will be drawing from his work in the following discussion of these features.²⁵

First, he says, this contemplation in action is not a life of fidelity to rules, but to what Ignatius called "the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Spirit is accustomed to write and imprint on the hearts of men". Perhaps the most awesome undertaking of the contemplative is this discernment of the guidance of the spirit. The way of the spirit is not often spoken in clear unmistakable words, but rather is received through intuition, dream, inspiration and "hunches". Uncertainty is not uncommon. Patient discernment is of the essence. Mahatma Gandhi spoke about his relationship to this inner direction or inner truth as he called it:

Devotion to this Truth is the sole reason for our existence. All our activities should be centered in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all

²⁴Mother Teresa as cited in Johnston, p. 27.

²⁵Johnston pp. 27-29.

other rules of correct living will be instinctive...
 If we once learn how to apply this never-failing test
 of Truth, we will at once be able to find out what is
 worth doing, what is worth seeing, what is worth
 reading.²⁶

A second characteristic of mysticism in action is that "one must cultivate what the old authors called "purity of intention". This simply means that the desire for self-interest falls away and one is free for God. In the East, a word often used to describe this characteristic is "non-attachment". The investment of oneself comes from love, never from a "desire for success or a fear of failure."

A third characteristic which flows easily from this is a loss of self. One gradually but certainly moves from an active life in which "I" am central to an active life in which "Christ" is central. For the Christian, the movement is toward the Reality known by Paul when he said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2:20). During this time of realization, one becomes Christ's body, walking where he walked, doing what is worth doing, seeing what is worth seeing. "One who loses self in this way constantly finds himself moving spontaneously and with great compassion toward the underprivileged, the poor, the sick and the imprisoned."

A fourth characteristic raised by Johnston is solitude and silence. What of solitude and silence in the active life? For some, such as Gandhi, one day each week

²⁶
 M.K. Gandhi as cited in Johnston p. 28.

is given to total silence. For others, such as Ignatius, the time apart may range from hours to months. The discipline varies, perhaps in response to the call of the spirit within. Discernment of need and call are of the utmost importance.

How then may we summarize the major points of description-definition which have been made. Initially the contemplative feels an irresistible call or desire for the life of contemplation, a lure toward a life devoted to union with God. Steps are then taken to so order one's existence that this primary desire may more easily be fulfilled. Moves are made toward simplicity, leaving behind distractions and "burdens", which are often referred to as "possessions" by others. This results in the contemplative often finding her/himself on the margins of society--geographically, as well as in terms of orientation, values and goals. The contemplative begins to live as though the Kingdom of God were present. S/he lives within the immediate presence of the God of love and justice, recognizing and taking a rightful place in the Divine Order.

The contemplative is filled with a passionate desire for God, knowing that Love is the reason for and fulfillment of being. A faithful relationship with the Beloved is the joy of the contemplative. Consequently, the contemplative develops an exceptional moral sensitivity and often a sense of the loss of self. This "loss" becomes gain when new life is created with the indwelling of the Holy. For the Christian

contemplative, this life is devoted to the way of Christ, serving the poor and comforting the sorrowful. The contemplative becomes "destitute of supersensual ambitions and craves no occult knowledge or power". Life forms an organic all-encompassing, pulsating whole with great attention given to inner guidance.

Contemplation is very practical, not theoretical and is focused on what one does, not how one reasons. But perhaps the most visible characteristic of contemplation is the aspect of solitude and silence. This is the aspect which, traditionally, seems most difficult to integrate with the revolutionary. However, it is also obvious that the great contemplatives in action as well as the great contemplative-revolutionaries have done so.

This chapter has been an overview of the outstanding characteristics of the contemplative life and the pattern for living created by the contemplative. In Chapter Four we will look at some of the characteristics which do integrate well with the life of the revolutionary such as: the irresistible call, Love, commitment to visions of the Kingdom of God, life on the margins of society, and exceptional moral sensitivity. We will also look at the problem areas of solitude and revolution's own offering--violence.

However, in preparation for this, Chapter Three is a description of revolution and the revolutionary life. It is to this work which we now turn.

CHAPTER III

REVOLUTION AND THE REVOLUTIONARY LIFE

In this chapter we will take a look at revolution and the distinctive elements of revolutionary life for the purpose of understanding what is fundamental in each. As the project progresses the intention is, of course, to follow the descriptions which emerge from each chapter as they relate to each other. However, the scope of this chapter is simply to discover some of the deeper meanings and motivations of revolution and revolutionaries. Here we may see the contributions of revolutionary mentality and action, and its relevance and potential for the church. What is revolution? What is behind its power? These are the questions before us at this time.

...Perhaps most important is the awareness at points in history that in the pursuit of certain goals, often ostensibly moral, things have gone desperately wrong and that to continue on the same course is insanity. This negative revelation, a sense of abyss and deadendness, lies at the heart of revolutionary change. It is also a theme that appears in Christian thought as the failure of law or the failure of the ethical, a failure that drives the individual to despair but also paves the way for conversion and faith. This parallel to religious conversion is essential to understanding revolution.¹

As noted by chroniclers of "revolution", the word has a myriad of references. We hear of revolutions in clothing styles, music and architecture. These revolutions imply change, perhaps a drastic change, thus the use of the term. Webster's defines revolution as:

¹Jon Gunnemann, The Moral Meaning of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. ix.

2: alteration or change in some manner or respect as
 a.: a sudden radical or complete change (a---in thought);
 a basic reorientation and reorganization (a---in technology)
 b: a fundamental change in political organization or in a government or constitution and the
 substitution of another by the governed.²

To clarify the use of this term for the purpose of this project I would like to underscore the line by the governed. The terms "revolution" and "revolutionary change" are often used to describe such disparate events as the takeover of Chile by Pinochet and the Nicaraguan Revolution led by the Sandinistas. As I begin to forge a working definition for the purpose of this project, the first principle is that a revolution is waged by the governed. And the second is: for the purpose of creating a change in the fundamental principles of the government. Both must be there.

At this time, I will make a brief and simple comparison of revolutionary change to other types of social change to create a contextual picture.

A social change may be brought about by the governed; however, if it is within the context of established social fundamentals, it would not be considered revolutionary. Such a change would be relatively minor when set beside the possibility of changing fundamental principles. An example of this would be, within a society based on slavery, to change an aspect in the treatment of slaves. The society may abolish a previous prohibition and "allow" the slave population to attend the churches belonging to the dominant

²Webster's Dictionary

population, while still keeping them as slaves. This change may be brought about by the governed; however, as a fundamental principle has not been changed, it would not be considered revolutionary. Perhaps reformist, but not revolutionary.

Or, a social change may involve a change in the fundamental principles of the government, but if the change is not brought about by the governed, for the purpose of this work, it would not be considered revolutionary. Very simply, such would be the case if Community A's fundamental principles were changed by Community B.

With these distinctions in mind, how then may we proceed in our understanding of revolutions? H.G.S. Nordholt, quotes a definition from Siegmund Neumann. Revolution is

a drastic fundamental change in the political organization, the social structure; it is control of the economic domain, and the dominant myth of social order, which therewith signals a radical break in the continuity of historical development.³

Here we recognize many of the same concepts mentioned earlier, with the addition of changes in the "dominant myth of the social order". This addition reflects the awareness that revolutions replace one understanding of Reality with another, as well as one social and economic order with another.

I was able to witness this on my December 1980 trip to Nicaragua. The New Creation felt real birth pains in

³Johannes Verkuyl and H.G. Schulte Nordholdt, Responsible Revolution (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 76.

July of 1979, with the overthrow of Somoza; however, the revolutionaries took their name, Sandanistas, from the name of a revolutionary leader in Nicaragua during the 1930's, Augusto Cesar Sandino. The conception of the New Creation actually reaches back to this time, with the time of the first Somoza being the time of darkness or chaos before order was created.

It is not a large step to see parallels with a revolution much closer to home, the American Revolution. Time begins for white Americans with The Revolution, the birth of our country. Time does not begin with the birth of the Sioux or Cherokee Nations, for example. Once conceived, the New Order or the New Reality becomes The Reality within which all future activity will be held accountable and tested.

Until this happens, the revolutionary lives on the margins of the existing society, making little investment in the dominant society and giving all effort to preparations necessary for the creation of the new society which is to take its place.

Gunnemann also suggests that a key to understanding the nature of revolution and a society's response to it is the question of evil.

Every society has a 'paradigm' (shared exemplar) solution to the problem of evil as a part of its total constellation of symbols, beliefs, norms and values. My thesis is that in a revolution it is this paradigm that is called into question. Political and social revolutions are innovative responses to the problem of evil (*italics his*) and a full revolution can be said to have occurred only

when a new paradigm solution to the problem of evil has emerged.⁴

I would also submit here that those in support of any particular revolution and those opposed to it hold basic differences with regard to the nature of evil itself. For example, in some segments of a society it may be seen as basically evil, or at least unacceptable to sacrifice profit or power for the sake of increased educational or health benefits for the poor (even were the increases to reflect reformist, and not revolutionary action). For the poor, on the other hand, it is evil to opt for profit and power at their expense, thus the desire to change fundamental assumptions such as these in governments and social organizations.

These initial steps toward a definition of revolution cannot, of course, be exhaustive. Rather, we are looking at descriptions or characteristics of revolution that we may begin to see the shape of the pictures coming into focus.

Nordholdt notes a number of definitive marks of revolution. We will now turn to five of these to help us fill in the picture. Then, two of these: the relation between the masses and the elite (which serves as a backdrop for our discussion of the relation of the revolutionary and the masses) and the call to revolution, will be looked at more closely. Nordholdt's marks are these:

- A. The Influence of the French Revolution which gave to the revolutionary four outstanding characteristics:
 - 1. The will to renewal and faith in its possibility. There is in the revolutionary a passionate belief that a new age is about to break through.

⁴Gunnemann, p. 19.

2. Every revolution is heady with freedom. Freedom in its first phase is negative--freedom from something, liberation. Afterward comes the summons to grasp hold of freedom itself.
 3. The idea that the course of revolution is irresistible.
 4. Belief in human goodness.
- B. The relation between the masses and the elite... Poverty by itself does not start revolutions. Every century has seen bitter poverty. But only as change or renewal appears possible does poverty or political oppression seem unbearable.
 - C. The planning of the movement...Revolutions are marked by a belief in human ability to manipulate society. Apart from the variations, however, the possibilities of transforming cultures are extremely limited.
 - D. Impatience...Revolutions are marked by intense impatience. The new must come quickly. The existent is intolerable. Adding this to a belief in power to manipulate society, impatience becomes an important ingredient in revolutionary action.
 - E. The Call to Revolution...Finally, a mark of revolution is a strong sense of calling in the minds of the leaders to spread the revolution.⁵

Because of their parallels in the contemplative life, we move now to a closer look at two of these characteristics: the call of the revolutionary, and the moral sensitivity which pulls the revolutionary to the side of the poor.

Ample testimony is given by revolutionaries (The Diary of Che Guevara, Camillo Torres: Revolutionary Priest, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, Songs of Love and War by Gaspar Garcia Laviana) that once the call to revolution is felt, nothing else matters. Literally. Previous lives are left, be they medicine, parish priesthood, home, or schooling. The particulars may vary. The outcome does not. The previous

⁵Verkuy1 and Nordholdt, pp. 78-85.

life is left behind, or at the very least is not allowed to interfere with the revolution, as a strong commitment is made to the revolution and its progress. Not only is the revolutionary about the business of creating a new society, for the time, a new being has also been born.

A new style of living is either taken on or intensified. (See earlier mention of living on the margins of society,) New priorities are set for time and energy. New skills are learned, perhaps a new territory as well. A new community of trust and interdependence is formed, a community on which one's very life may depend. The revolutionary risks all of this uncertainty because of the certainty of the call. Nothing else matters. Against all odds, the revolutionary makes such a commitment, knowing that the revolution will be waged by the poor and powerless of a society against its wealthy and powerful.

And the choice of revolutionaries to side with the poor and oppressed? Displayed by the revolutionary is an exceptional moral sensitivity, the ability to put the needs of a community above one's own needs, even to the extent that one is willing to risk his/her own life that they may be fulfilled. The ability to commit one's life to something greater than oneself is a mature accomplishment. This sensitivity, seen in persons of high moral development, may be nurtured in others as well. Crucial to the life of the church and its faithfulness to Christ is the development of our ability to live with this sensitivity.

These two characteristics, as well as others with parallels in the contemplative life will be more fully explored in the following chapter.

However, a description of revolution would be incomplete without also mentioning the moral problems encountered by revolution. Three of these are: violence, the question of necessity, and the fate of the vanquished. A discussion of these follows.

All three fall within the realm of "a society's perception of evil". For the revolutionary, evil (the old world) is passing away, falling under the weight of its own sinfulness, or the secular equivalents to such language. Often, any methods available are used to hasten the passing of this evil.

Gunnemann observes that in revolutionary dualism,

To the extent that evil can be isolated and identified, there can be no moral compunction about its total eradication, by violence or by any other means.⁶

However, Nouwen also observes,

If evil is seen only as an irreversible, clearly visible and sharply outlined tumor, then there is only one possibility: cut it out. And then violence is necessary. But when evil is reversible and can be turned into good through forgiveness, then nonviolence becomes possible...⁷

It is often the case that revolutionaries sense that they are in the process of creating a new order and that their activity is truly primal and convulsive. There is no

⁶Gunnemann, p. 52.

⁷Henri J. M. Nouwen, Pray To Live (Notre Dame: Fides, 1972), p. 65.

room for neutrality, because there is no middle ground. The old is passing away, and the new is beginning. One must stand on one side or the other as the earth moves. However, as is hinted in the Nouwen quote, this does not always have to be the case.

In religious vocabulary, the hope of the revolutionary is for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the perfect communal society, the time and place which defies description, the just and righteous community. (See Cardenal's reflections on this in the upcoming interview, page 61.)

It is often thought that impediments to this creation must be eliminated at all cost. (A problem of missing the understanding of Way, and seeing only destination?)

This passion, of course, fuels the phase of revolution itself, not reconstruction. During the phase of reconstruction, radicals and moderates often find themselves working together in coalitions of varying forms for the reforming of the country.

But during the revolution, two worlds strictly exist.

Often seen in revolution is a type of "revolutionary dualism" within which evil can not be transformed, and must be eliminated, to allow for the saving of the people.

How the evil is eliminated raises the inevitable question of violence within the revolutionary movement. As mentioned earlier, in the "Scope and Limitation" section of this project, I do not intend to pursue the question of violence in social change, but rather the question of union

for mystic and revolutionary. However, as it related to the area of "shared reality" the question of violence can not be overlooked.

At the outset an obvious schism presents itself. Traditionally, the contemplative life is a life of non-violence, giving great care to the disciplines of peace and peacemaking. There have been, however, notable exceptions. The mystic, St. Bernard of Clairvoux, gave active support to the Crusades.

Revolutionaries, on the other hand are well known for their violent activities, as most are involved with armed insurrections. However, there are notable exceptions to this as well. Mahatma Gandhi, revolutionary and mystic, insisted on non-violence as not only a tactic, but also a principle and vision.

This being said, what of revolutionary violence? Is it part of the shared reality? First, a look at the subject of violence itself.

Scholars in the field make a distinction between spontaneous violence and non-spontaneous violence. The rejuvenating aspect of spontaneous violence such as in the case of Frederick Douglass is often mentioned. In the incident recounted here, Mr. Douglass has been attacked by Mr. Covey, a slave-master:

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free...He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced,

who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.⁸

The feelings, resolve and action seen here in an individual, can be seen in the social realm in revolutions. Though, as Gunnemann points out, the rejuvenating element is in the saying of "no more" rather than in the violence, the two are more often than not inseparably bound. An initial "no more" may not be accompanied by violence; however, maintenance of this position often requires the meeting of "master" violence with "slave" violence in response. Such would have been the case, were a white man ever to attempt to "whip" Mr. Douglass again.

Douglass's reference to resurrection is not uncommon. As mentioned earlier, the feeling of the revolutionary has been described as a feeling of new birth; Gunnemann would say, conversion to a new life, no longer bound by the old. Under the old way, human community has been violated; it is this violation which begets violence and a new way of relationship and community.

The second major category found in the study of violence is the category of non-spontaneous violence, a part of a tactic. Here the discussion usually begins with

⁸Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 74 as cited in Gunnemann, p. 85.

an analysis of force; when it is legitimate and when it is not; when it is wrong (molesting a child) and when it is right (stopping the molester); who is given permission by the society to use force (violence) and who is not.

The issue of violence as a tactic raises many difficult areas for discussion. Among these is the question of the consequences of violent and non-violent action, and the degree to which this is to be taken into account in any evaluation which is made. For considerations such as these, it has been said that the distinctions of violence and non-violence are at best blurred. An example follows:

Gandhi's boycott of British cotton results in the undernourishment of children in Manchester, and the blockade of the Allies in war-time caused the death of German children. It is impossible to coerce a group without damaging both life and property and without imperilling the interests of the innocent with those of the guilty.⁹

And yet, having noted this, are we left with saying it matters not? I don't think so. Rather, this is simply a sobering reminder that perhaps there is more middle ground than was first perceived, and at the very least, ample ground for humility. Jacques Ellul comments on violence and a Christian stance toward it.

Instead of listening to the fomenters of violence, Christians ought to repent for having been too late. For if the time comes when despair sees violence as the only possible way, it is because Christians were not what they should have been.¹⁰

⁹Reinhold Niehbur, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p. 172.

¹⁰Jacques Ellul, On Violence (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), pp. 155-156 as cited in Gunnemann, p. 92.

Indeed, it is a position of almost unimaginable anguish to perceive that violence is the only option for one's community. For those of us not in such positions, we may ask what it is that we "should have been", that such despair may never reach another...

For those able to pursue the philosophical questions, the starting place may be: In a revolution, where does spontaneous defensive violence stop and planned violence begin? This question must be understood, and, perhaps for all of us, eventually answered. However, for the purpose of this section, I do not intend to make a judgment on revolutionary violence, but rather to explore the question of whether this aspect of revolutionary life may have something in common with the life of contemplation.

At this point, my suggestion is that it does not. The shared experience is the experience of living in eschatological time, which does involve disruption of the old and living in a new order. However, the implements of change are different, I believe. A most interesting point comes to light here. Revolutionaries committed to non-violence will be the ones most able to also be contemplatives. This observation will be drawn out in the final chapter.

In the next chapter, I will discuss other areas these two traditions have in common, as well as noting the problem areas, and distinctive contributions of each. However, at this point, how may we summarize the outstanding characteristics of revolution and revolutionary life?

Revolutionary change involves a change in the fundamental principles of the life of a community. Today the church's faithfulness to Christ may also be dependent on its ability to be involved in a way of life which is radically different from the communities in which it finds itself, as the Kingdom of God which it preaches is indeed radically different from the dominant societies in the United States. Thus an understanding of the essence of revolutionary existence and its struggles with dominant societies may help us see what we may expect if we live as Christ's eschatological community.

This life "on the edge", the life of a revolutionary is begun by the sense of an irresistible call and is then marked by an awareness of intense need. The responsive actions of revolutionaries are fueled by a strong will for renewal which is born of hope. This strong will sustains the revolutionary through intense repression and even the deaths of companions.

The goal of the revolution is to bring fundamental change in the principles of the social order and to create a new society which will bring justice for poor and marginal peoples. Among the changes which occur is that a new definition of evil becomes operative. What was accepted in the old order is no longer acceptable in the new.

The revolutionary is driven by Love and his/her life is marked by exceptional moral sensitivity which often leads to a loss of self for the sake of the community.

Because the revolutionary is committed to marginal people, the revolutionary usually finds her/himself living in marginal places such as skid row, shanty town or "the bush", letting go of the values, investments and goals of the more dominant society. Here we see obvious parallels to the life of the contemplative. The marginality of both revolutionary and contemplative is an important key to understanding their lives. This will be more fully developed in the following chapter as will be the problem areas and distinctive contributions of each way of life.

CHAPTER IV

CONTEMPLATION AND REVOLUTION:

SEPARATE OR SHARED REALITY

In this chapter we will take a look at three categories for the characteristics found in contemplation and revolution. The purpose of this study is to begin to see the problems and possibilities inherent in their union.

First we will lift out those characteristics which are found in each mode of life, the common territory. The second section will be a look at those characteristics which appear to be outside the possibility of integration, the problem areas. And finally, we will look at characteristics which are not shared by either, but whose presence enhances both, these are the distinctive contributions of each.

Merton (had an) intuition that contemplation and revolution are two forms of radicalism which never should be separated.¹

Do any areas emerge then as natural places of connection, as possible points of union? If it is desirable that these two live as one, do we find any common ground upon which they meet? Are they two expressions of the same reality? If so, what is that reality and what are its parameters?

¹Henri J. M. Nouwen, Pray To Live (Notre Dame: Fides, 1972), p. 4.

A: Common Ground

(1) Love. Ernesto Cardenal has said that love is the reality which is shared by both mystic and revolutionary. (See The Interview, pp. 59-66.) This is the propelling emotion for the lives, decisions and actions of each. For the revolutionary, it is a love for oppressed people, and a desire to see the limitations which have been imposed on their lives lifted. For the contemplative, love is the force moving the mystic beyond artificial limitations and ever closer to complete union with God. Here the boundaries are broken and "barriers obliterated". For both, the fulfillment of earthly life is the realization of this love on earth.

(2) The Kingdom of God. Jim Strathdee has written a song in which are found these lines:

We're waiting for the Kingdom of God
Waiting for the Kingdom of God
What we do while we wait
Depends on what we're waiting for
We're waiting for the Kingdom of God.²

Both revolutionary and contemplative are waiting for the Kingdom of God. The power of the Kingdom for the revolutionary is seen in the realization of human community on earth as it is in Heaven, the arrival of the time when all barriers are obliterated between classes, races and sexes. Here poverty and exploitation of people and creation are overcome. The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

²Jim Strathdee, "Waiting for the Kingdom of God" (used with composer's permission, March 1981.)

The power of the Kingdom for the contemplative is the realization of full spiritual community between self and God in which all barriers are obliterated. Living in a holy communion with God and one's brothers and sisters is the ambience of a traditional monastic community. It is the human attempt to live within the present Kingdom of God to the best of human ability. Each one does the work s/he is able to do, contributes what s/he can to the life of the community, leaves behind possessions which may possess him or her, and receives what s/he needs. Hospitality is a distinctive characteristic of many monastic communities, including the Benedictine. The wanderers in society are cared for and asked to contribute what they can.

Also involved in this eschatological aspect of life is the sense, for the revolutionary, that the end of the Old Age is at hand, and the new is about to break through. For both, there is an awareness of freedom from forms of bondage in this world. The contemplative experiences this in freedom from bondage which inhibits or fetters the spirit as well as the flesh. For the revolutionary, bonds of class, race, sex, exploitation and greed stand in high relief.

(3) Irresistible Call. The affirmation is made by both contemplative and revolutionary that an irresistible call is felt toward their respective commitments. There is ample witness to the fact that they feel they simply could do no other. Once the call is felt, the decision to go may be the result of wrestling with questions of extremity, but

rarely of direction. The decision is less likely to be based on reasoned response than passionate involvement. One's life has been called for. And though reason may be a part of the decision-making process, the answer comes from the heart.

(4) Exceptional Moral Sensitivity. Both contemplative and revolutionary possess an exceptional moral sensitivity, which begins, and sometimes ends, with the willingness to lose oneself for the sake of another. For the contemplative, the loss of self becomes a "not I live, but Christ lives in me" transformation, followed by a spontaneous movement toward the poor, as the body of Christ. For the revolutionary, the willingness is to lose oneself for the sake of the community which is oppressed. This reflects the mature ability to make a commitment to something larger than oneself.

(5) Marginality. Because of the responses made to the dominant society, both revolutionary and contemplative find themselves living on the margins of those societies; the revolutionary in the jungle, back alley, or bush and the contemplative in the monastery, hermitage, or place of solitude. At the margins of what is, each makes the discovery of what is possible.

Not only geographically do they find themselves on the edge. Also, priorities differ from the dominant society, as do values. While the dominant society may find its organizing principle in maintenance and growth of the status quo, marginal people do not. While marginal people may pray and

pay dearly for a transformed society, the dominant elements in that society most likely would not.

There is also another way in which revolutionaries and contemplatives find themselves on the edge. Within their own callings (revolution and contemplation), they occupy the most radical position. Within the group which we may call "social changers", the revolutionary is the most radical, the one who desires change at the root of things. This is the all-encompassing passion of life. It is not worked in among other concerns. Though other concerns or gifts may exist, they are put to use for the revolution. For example, the revolutionary may also be a poet; thus s/he writes revolutionary poetry.

Within the group which we may call "prayers", the contemplative is the most radical, the one who devotes the core and all of life to this call. It is the all-encompassing passion and the devotion to which all other gifts are given. The contemplative and the revolutionary are about the business of radical transformations, of self and society.

B. Problem Areas

Each mode presents a problem area, an area which does not seem to readily fit into an integrated life. The contribution of the contemplatives is solitude and silence. Each day in a contemplative community is ordered in a way that allows for silence. Or perhaps it would be more truthful to say that each day is ordered to allow for activity.

Solitude and silence are so fundamental to the life of contemplation that it would be unthinkable to allow encroachments on this time.

At first this would appear irreconcilable with the life of action known to the revolutionary. However, there have been those who have lived the contemplative revolutionary life and found both silence and social change to be necessary. These persons include Gandhi, Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and Ernesto Cardenal. The addition of regular disciplined times of silence and solitude to the more traditional revolutionary mode allows for valuable times of reflection, centering, honesty and renewal.

The difficult area coming from the revolutionaries and one which indeed is most often associated with revolution is violence. However, as we have seen, violence is not intrinsic to changing fundamental principles of social order though defiance and coercion most certainly do tend to be. Any effort to coerce someone into doing something they do not want to do or to stop doing something they do want to do is very likely to involve some element of force, especially in cases involving different world views and therefore assumptions of reasonable interests.

It is interesting to note that those who have embraced both contemplation and revolution generally do so only as they also embrace a commitment to non-violence.

C. Unique Contributions of Each

And are there special contributions each can make from their own experience? Obviously the contemplative mode brings with it a tradition rich with wisdom and understanding with regard to the life of the spirit and human spiritual need. I would also submit that the discovery in this realm of the importance of silence and solitude is invaluable to the understanding of full human vitality. From the contemplatives comes the knowledge and power for transformation of the inner self.

Corresponding to this is the revolutionary awareness of intense human social need and the great sin of greed which is its cause.

Pursuit of this awareness brings the realization that some do not have, because others have taken more than their share of what is available. Endowed with exceptional moral sensitivity, the recognition of this injustice enables the revolutionary to work for basic fundamental changes in a social order which allows and even encourages this inequity to happen. Others may be more likely to succumb to a sense of inevitability.

Each mode of living also offers unique disciplines which enable needed transformations to occur. The Christian contemplative lives with a discipline of "spiritual exercises" which create personal inner transformations and an openness to Christ's healing presence. The revolutionary, working for transformation on the social level, pursues

political, social and community disciplines. We can begin to see how a union of these two modes may work to strengthen and enable each one. Each shares a vision of the fullness of the Kingdom, within and without in a just, loving and participatory order.

The weaving begins. As noted in the original statement of the problem, one of the problems facing the church today is that we hold concepts of mysticism and revolution which appear to be mutually exclusive. By accepting this separation we do our tradition a great disservice, for we not only misunderstand the deeper meanings of each tradition, but also lose almost entirely the uniquely-faithful way of life which is possible when these two are joined. When they join, each becomes more than it was before as they are natural extensions of each other as well as co-residents within considerable common ground.

When these two do join, a new mode of life begins. Individuals living in such a mode know devotion to God and God's Way on earth. Thus adopting appropriate disciplines, regular times are spent each day in prayer and contemplation. A recognition that Love is the essential force in the universe continually influences decisions and action. And this recognition draws the contemplative-revolutionary toward a fuller participation in Love's possibilities. The contemplative-revolutionary feels an irresistible pull toward participation in the Kingdom of God and to the furthering of God's Way on earth. In the course of this activity s/he

often finds her/himself living on the margins of society with similarly afflicted persons, forming communities based outside the values of existing "possession oriented" societies. In the homes of these persons are constant discussions of method, in pursuit of freedom and of a just and communal society.

Growing in the contemplative-revolutionary is an exceptional moral sensitivity which may eventually result in a loss of self, as we know it.

These persons have lived, and do live. Their numbers are small. Their impact great. The next chapter is a look at one such life.

CHAPTER V

CONVERSATIONS WITH ERNESTO CARDENAL

Ernesto Cardenal has been chosen as a case in point of contemplative revolutionary life because I was able not only to read his works but also to speak with him in person, as he was most gracious to receive me into his busy schedule. The intention in speaking with him was to better understand how these two great traditions had come together in his own life.

In this chapter we will take a look at Ernesto Cardenal for the purpose of testing out the thesis that contemplation and revolution may merge well when they meet in the Christian tradition.

This chapter begins with a short review of recent Nicaraguan history as the revolutionary setting into which Cardenal was born. It is followed by a brief biographical sketch of Cardenal himself. The biography is illustrated by selections from Cardenal's poetic, contemplative and revolutionary writings. A full listing of all consulted works by Cardenal will appear in the bibliography.

The chapter closes with an edited transcript of the interview I was able to have with him and further reflections on that interview. The reflections are written with an eye for changes in Cardenal's positions, new learnings and possible conclusions.

"I'll give this country peace if I have to shoot every other man in Nicaragua to get it."

--Anastasio Somoza, 1933

A. The Setting: Nicaragua in Revolution

For the following "setting" I draw heavily on a report by Harold Jung which appeared in the November '79 issue of The New Left Review.

The majority of the accounts of recent Nicaraguan history begin at 1909. It would be difficult to recount Nicaragua's history without speaking of the relationship which has existed between Nicaragua and the United States. In 1909 the United States was angered by decisions in Nicaragua to curb foreign investors. In response to these decisions, the Marines were sent to the country. They stayed almost continuously for twenty years. While there, they eventually organized and trained the National Guard, installing Anastasio Somoza (Tacho) as its commander. Commander Somoza was a Nicaraguan who once sold used cars in Philadelphia.¹

The first decades of the Twentieth Century saw great changes in Nicaragua. The country became one of the "banana republics"; however, in this case for wood and mining interests. Between 1914 and 1925 there were ten armed insurrections against U.S. companies.²

¹Wayne H. Cowan, "Nicaragua, The Revolution Takes Hold", Christianity and Crisis, XL:8 (May 12, 1980), 137.

²Harold Jung, "Behind the Nicaraguan Revolution", New Left Review, CXVII (Sept-Oct 1979), 69.

In 1927 it became apparent that the Nicaraguan government (despite support coming from the United States) was not able to resist the rebels. As dissatisfaction grew, peasants and workers, led by the much-revered Augusto Cesar Sandino, began the "Six Year War." The hope behind this struggle was twofold: to see the withdrawal of the Marines, and the establishment of national sovereignty.³

Between 1932 and 1936, there is a lack of clarity concerning what happened. According to the September-October 1979 issue of the New Left Review, in 1932 the Marines withdrew. And with Somoza as Commander, the National Guard took over. Soon afterward elections were held, with the liberal, Sacasa, winning. Sandino signed a peace treaty and disarmed his soldiers. He "retired" to the countryside to work on land reforms. However, the success of his programs began to undermine the economy.⁴

In 1934 Sandino was seized by the National Guard and shot. (Other reports--Christianity and Crisis, May 12, 1980, p. 137--say that he was lured to Managua to discuss peace and was killed there.) The cooperative farms were broken up and in the process hundreds of families killed.

Somoza and the National Guard took over the country in 1936-37, and set up an export-oriented economy which lasted into the 1950's. In 1954, there was an attempt on the life of Anastasio Somoza, but it failed. In 1956, someone was successful. At this time, Tachito, Tacho's son and recent ruler of Nicaragua took over.

³ibid., p. 70.

⁴ibid., p. 70.

The 1950's also saw a rise in peasant, worker and student movements. Again, there was rising hope for liberation and self-determination.⁵

But Somoza ruled until 1972, the date most historians mark as the beginning of the end for the Somoza dynasty. Actually, he ruled until July 1979, but the end began in December 1972 with the earthquake which devastated Managua.

It is reported that Somoza appropriated one-half of all aid received in Nicaragua to his own advantage. (New Left Review).⁶ As a result, opposition to him grew in all segments of the society. The earthquake was no respecter of class. Everyone felt the loss and knew the need for help.

The opposition formed into two groups by 1974: UDEL, the upper-class-dominated Union Democratica de Liberacion, and the FSLN, Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional, composed of workers, peasants and students. They joined forces in the summer of 1978 and in July 1979 gained control of Managua and liberated Nicaragua.⁷

B. The Biographical Sketch

Ernesto Cardenal, poet, revolutionary, contemplative, priest and government official was born in Nicaragua in 1925. His life has been lived on the edge of all he has known: poetry, social and political change, and religion. In none of these worlds has he walked the way of the majority.

⁵ibid., p. 74.

⁶ibid., p. 75.

⁷ibid., pp. 76-89.

The tumult of his country has, of course, had a profound effect on him. When Cardenal was nine, Sandino was killed. At nineteen, Somoza was running the country. He was an accomplished leader in the field of poetry at twenty-nine and also involved in a plot against the first Somoza. Cardenal was out of the country and studying for the priesthood at thirty-nine, and back in his beloved Nicaragua, serving the people of Solentiname as priest, and his Lord as contemplative at forty-nine. For the past year he has been working for the new government of Nicaragua as the Minister of Culture and resides in Managua.

It was as a poet that Cardenal first spoke to the Nicaraguan people. However, for the purpose of this project, I will refer to his poetry only as it gives insight into Cardenal, the contemplative and the revolutionary.

As mentioned in the previous section, it was in 1932 that the Marines withdrew from Nicaragua and Anastasio ("Tacho") Somoza began his rule. In April 1954 Cardenal was involved with some friends in an abortive plot against Tacho. Many of the leaders of the plot were killed and it is alleged that Tachito (Tacho's son) was involved in the interrogations of those captured.⁸ After the execution of Joaquin Pasos, Cardenal wrote an Epitaph for him:

Here he walked, through these streets, unemployed,
jobless and without a nickel.
Only poets, whores, and drunkards knew his verses.
He never went abroad.

⁸Ernesto Cardenal, Apocalypse and Other Poems (New York: New Directions, 1977), p. xii.

He was in prison.
 Now he's dead.
 He has no monument.

But
 remember him when you have concrete bridges,
 great turbines, tractors, silver-colored granaries,
 good governments.
 Because in his poems he purified his people's language
 which one day will be used to write the commercial
 treaties, the Constitution, the love letters and
 the decrees.⁹

For two years following his own escape, Cardenal translated many works and wrote Hora Zero, a recounting of the time of the plot, and today a revolutionary classic.¹⁰

In 1956, Anastasio Somoza was killed, and it was soon after this time that Cardenal experienced what he was called his "spiritual conversion" (See the Interview, p. 59). As a result of this conversion, he entered the Trappist Monastery at Gethsemani, Kentucky as a novice. There, he found to his surprise and joy, that Thomas Merton was the novice master. Cardenal was acquainted with Merton through his own poetry; however, Merton's influence on Cardenal was "less importantly poetic than it was spiritual".¹¹

In 1961, Cardenal translated a book of Merton's poetry, but while he was in Gethsemani, his writing was "limited" to the writing of meditations. So much of what Cardenal has written speaks eloquently of Love, the inter-relatedness within all creation and human dependence on God, that I find it difficult to choose only a few passages. I

⁹Cardenal, p. 15.

¹⁰Cardenal, p. xi.

¹¹Cardenal, p. xi.

must let Cardenal speak for himself, and his experience of the Contemplative life as a Trappist. These excerpts are taken from his meditations during the time he was in Gethsemani. The first reflects Cardenal's intense awareness of the contrast between the paradises on earth (and their consequences) and the paradise of Heaven come to earth.

From the time of Christ's agony and death Paradise has remained open again for man. But this Paradise is certainly not found in pleasure nor in the comfort of the tropical "paradises" of the plush hotels or at Miami Beach, but only on Golgotha.

Paradise means union with God...(and) man's union with God will engender a second time of transformation of this earth into Paradise.¹²

Cardenal speaks of the primacy of the contemplative experience, and of its place in a proper understanding of love.

As Bergson has told us, human love has borrowed the language of mystical love, and it was not mystical love that borrowed the language of human love.¹³

The two excerpts which follow let us see Cardenal's vision of the Kingdom of God. The beauty of his words reflects the subtlety and the glory of his vision.

There is hidden in these parables about the seeds an inscrutable mystery: the seeds are parts of the genealogical tree of evolution. We are descended with all other living beings of the kingdoms of animals and plants, we are constituent parts of the Tree of Life. The Kingdom of Heaven not only resembles a seed: it is a seed, and one primeval cell has been growing and replicating itself to assume the form of wheat, the form of the first mustard tree, and eventually of man, in whose interiority is enshrined, as in a seed, the Kingdom of Heaven.¹⁴

¹²Ernesto Cardenal, To Live Is To Love (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 134-135.

¹³Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. 136.

¹⁴Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. 145.

And,

The Jews expected the Kingdom of Heaven to be an earthly Kingdom, and in this expectation they were not entirely wrong, because the Kingdom of Heaven is also an earthly kingdom: it is a heavenly kingdom founded on earth, and this is why we ask in the Our Father that the Kingdom of Heaven come to us.¹⁵

And, finally, the last two selections speak of Cardenal's understanding of the Cosmos as one body, and of the place of each element in the Body of Christ.

The entire cosmos is in communion. The calcium in our bodies is the same calcium that we find in the sea ...in the stars...and in interstellar space...Actually, there are no interstellar spaces...since the entire cosmos forms one single body, more or less rarefied. The constitutive elements of the meteorites (such as calcium, iron, copper, phosphorus) that have split off from distant stars are the same elements which are found in our planet, in our bodies and in the interstellar spaces. Thus we are made of the matter of the stars, or, to say it more accurately, the entire cosmos is made of our own flesh. And when the Word became flesh and dwelled among us, what Adam said to Eve became applicable to all nature: "This is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone." In the body of Christ, as in our own body, is incarnate the entire creation.¹⁶

And even the liturgy of the church finds the marking of its time to be in accord with the cycles of the cosmos.

All beings share in the same cosmic rhythm. The whirling of the atoms, the circulation of our blood...the chant of the monks and the cycle of the liturgical year are in accord with the cycle of the harvest, the seasons of the year and the cycle of life and death (and in accord with the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ.)¹⁷

Thus he lived and wrote while in Gethsemani. But according to his biographers, Cardenal's health, which was never very good, weakened while he was there, and on the

¹⁵Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁶Cardenal, *ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁷Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. 154.

advice of Merton, Cardenal left the Trappists after two years and in 1959 entered the Benedictine Priory in Cuernavaca, Mexico to continue his studies. Merton writes :

Ernesto Cardenal left Gethsemani because of ill health. However, today I can see that this is not the only reason: it did not make sense to continue at Gethsemani as a novice and as a student when actually he was already a teacher.¹⁸

From 1961-1965 Cardenal attended the seminary in La Ceja, Colombia to complete his education and in 1965 was ordained a priest.

At this time he returned to Nicaragua and founded the community of Our Lady of Solentiname on the island of Mancarron in Lake Nicaragua. The Community of Solentiname was born from plans Cardenal had often discussed with Merton. It was a contemplative community composed mostly of peasants and fisher people. Consequently, life was basically that of the campesino with the addition of contemplation and Bible study.

There was no ritual such as is practiced in traditional monasticism, but rather, a folk-mass on Sundays (from which comes the now-famous "Misa Campesina") to which dozens of campesinos from the other islands in the Solentiname Archipelago came. There was also Bible Study which was part of the celebration. An excerpt from one of the discussions follows. It helps to give insight into the struggles and questions of the people surrounding and within Solentiname.

¹⁸Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. 19.

This time we had Mass on the opposite shore, in a humble village called Papaturro, on the bank of a river in the forest, almost on the border of Costa Rica. A group of us from Solentiname had gone, and in a little church surrounded by cacao trees we discussed these verses with the people from Papaturro:

At this time Jesus said:
 "I praise you, Father,
 Lord of heaven and earth,
 because you have revealed to simple people
 the things that you hid
 from the clever and the learned.
 Yes, Father,
 because this is the way you wanted it."

I asked: "What do you think, Olivia?"
 She answered: "It seems to me that Jesus is saying that the wisdom of the world is of no value for God. That is, in the eyes of God. Because it seems to me that it's wisdom based on money. Somebody who has no money can have just one kind of wisdom: spiritual. Money is the basis of that other wisdom, and so it's a wisdom opposed to equality and love."

I said that Olivia was quite right, that that's an unjust wisdom, because it's the result of economic inequality and at the same time a cause of more economic inequality. In our system, education is the monopoly of the rich. For example, here where we are, there are uneducated people only because there are poor people. But God's system is the reverse of ours: God gives his wisdom to simple people and hides it from the clever and wise. That's why Jesus praises the Father: because that wisdom is an act of justice.¹⁹

Theologically, Cardenal has been influenced by the Theology of Liberation and has been a teacher in the concientization movement, a literacy movement which teaches concepts of liberation through socio-religious awareness as well as literacy. In Solentiname, the discussion of the Scriptures opened many channels of understanding in this human awareness process.

In 1970 Cardenal spent three months in Cuba where he

¹⁹Ernesto Cardenal, The Gospel in Solentiname (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978), II, 9-10.

kept a comprehensive diary (now in book form entitled In Cuba). The time in Cuba brought for him a "second conversion"²⁰, persuading him that the society which he thought impossible, was indeed possible, but only after drastic revolutionary change. In The Arrival, Cardenal writes of a dream of free Nicaragua:

We get off the plane and we go, Nicaraguans and foreigners, all mixed together toward the huge lighted building...I think of how proud I am to be holding the passport of my socialist country, and of my satisfaction at arriving in a Socialist Nicaragua. ... and the emotion of coming back to my country during a revolution with more changes, more and more decrees of expropriation that I'd hear of, changes more and more radical... and I see you in the eyes of everybody... and they ask natives and foreigners for their passports... but it was all a dream and I am in Somoza's Nicaragua...²¹

The time in Cuba influenced Cardenal greatly, and once he returned to Solentiname, his teaching of Christianity was also changed, or perhaps, crystalized. Famous words of his, "Now in Latin America, to practice religion is to make revolution," reflect not only his teaching, but also his life.

However, given the course of the revolution in Nicaragua, this led to a break with the commitment he shared with Merton to non-violence. Yet he was still "deeply unhappy about the need for violence, remaining at heart a man of peace in the profoundest sense."²²

²⁰Cardenal, Apocalypse, p. xviii.

²¹Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. 68.

²²Cardenal, *ibid.*, p. xviii.

Cardenal lived in Solentiname for twelve years until 1977 when the community was devastated in the struggle against Somoza.

In '77 Cardenal was made an exile, returning to Nicaragua only after the overthrow of Somoza in the summer of '79. While in exile he spoke on behalf of the revolution and raised money for the revolutionaries.

He never took up arms himself, but speaks in support of violence when it is the only option. As of this writing, Father Ernesto Cardenal is serving his country as the Minister of Culture in the new government and resides in Managua.

C. The Interview

Cooper: Will you speak about what it was that you experienced as your own "spiritual conversion"?

Cardenal: It was an experience of love. It had been a long time, almost all my life that I felt that God was calling me for a life dedicated to him. But I resisted the idea. I was involved in a lot of other things. Especially I had much love for girls, and much desire to know human love in marriage. I wanted to know this but I also fled from it. The feeling was more and more powerful that I should devote my life to God and finally one day, I decided to do that. And so God revealed to me greatest love I have ever experienced in my life. I felt a great union with God and this was the great change in my life, my conversion.

Cooper: What was happening in those days? What was the situation?

Cardenal: The political situation was that there was a strong movement against the first Somoza. I participated in this, but the movement failed. We continued to plan and reorganize to overthrow Somoza. Several months later he was killed.

Cooper: Did you experience your conversion at this time?

Cardenal: It was about two years later.

Cooper: Since the time of your conversion, there have been those who have spoken of you as a mystic. Do you also consider yourself a mystic or how would you talk about your own spirituality?

Cardenal: It is very difficult to speak about that. In the first place I don't really know what a mystic is. And I don't believe that I am a mystic. I have not aspired to mysticism. But if you consider that mysticism is union with God, then I feel that I do have this. After all, I would still consider myself an apprentice in mysticism.

Cooper: There was a time when you lived a contemplative life. Will you speak about this time in your life? And how it was for you?

Cardenal: Principally it was when I was a Trappist monk. And afterwards I also spent two years in a monastery in Cuernavaca (Benedictine) where I had a contemplative life. Then I was a couple of years in a seminary in which I also spent a good amount of time in contemplation. Of course, the twelve years in Solentiname were a contemplative style of life. But when I became involved with

the work of the revolution, I had little time for contemplation other than my daily prayers.

Cooper: And now, do you have a contemplative life?

Cardenal: Now I have a life of much action.

Cooper: Within this, is there time for contemplation?

Cardenal: The contemplation of action, yes.

Cooper: Merton had an intuition that contemplation and revolution were a part of the same reality. Would you also say this? (I was so nervous I misquoted here.)

Cardenal: Yes, I could say that they are the same reality, that is, two halves of the same reality. It is a reality that should not be divided. Mysticism and Revolution? I believe that a mystic should be a revolutionary. And a revolutionary, in a certain sense is a mystic.

Cooper: So you would say that they do share a common reality?

Cardenal: Yes.

Cooper: Will you speak about that reality? What it is, as you see it, that they share?

Cardenal: Love. The realization of love on earth.

Cooper: Will you say more about this?

Cardenal: No, we are running out of time...

Cooper: I see. I thank you very much for this time. Will you speak about the relation of mysticism and revolution in your own life?

Cardenal: Contemplation brought me to revolution. It taught me to study the world as it really is, including the capitalistic system. It lead me to believe that a different system had to be created through revolution. When I came to know the Cuban Revolution, I became a revolutionary. And this brought me to the style of life which I had

seen as a result of my religious understandings, and of the gospel.

(Note: Cardenal has referred to his trip to Cuba as his "second conversion".)

Cooper: You have spoken of the gospel. What, for you, is at the center of the gospel?

Cardenal: The message of the perfect communist society, which is going to reign on earth, what we would call the Kingdom of God. Above all, when I preach I like to preach about the Kingdom of God, and to announce that it is coming. The whole gospel, including the Old Testament, and in the New Testament the Epistles and the Apocalypse, can not be understood without understanding the Kingdom of God.

Cooper: The Kingdom of God. Is this the idea which has been most powerful in your life?

Cardenal: Yes.

Cooper: And is it still?

Cardenal: Yes.

Cooper: When the revolution came to Nicaragua, how were you involved? Were you in the country?

Cardenal: When the insurrection began, which was in 1977, I took part in it, not with arms, but by helping from outside of the country, working politically and raising money until the triumph came.

Cooper : You were never a combatant?

Cardenal : With arms, no.

Cooper : Will you speak about how it was that you came to support an armed revolution?

Cardenal : When I realized that it was the only possible way to liberate us from the Somoza dictatorship.

Cooper : And now, what conclusions have you come to concerning violence?

Cardenal : Violence is morally neutral. Violence can be used to protect the innocent or attack the innocent. There is good violence and bad violence. Violence is a use of force and can be used for good or for evil.

Cooper : So it is the use of violence that makes the difference for you?

Cardenal : Yes. To kill in order to defend the helpless even though the act be done by a person who himself is a criminal is good. A criminal who is by his actions alleviating suffering is at that moment not a criminal.

Cooper : Does this reflect a change in your thinking on violence?

Cardenal : Yes, because before I had a less clear idea.

Cooper : What was it that brought about the change?

Cardenal : The Theology of Liberation that is now in Latin America and which explains our reality, and the morality of violence and revolution.

Cooper : Miguel D'Escoto has said that violence is never the right choice, but here in Nicaragua, it was the only choice. It sounds like you are saying that violence is a right choice. Is there a difference here?

Cardenal : No, we are the same. In Nicaragua, it was the only choice we had, and therefore the right one.

Cooper : The church has given various responses to the Theology of Liberation. How do you feel about your tie to the institutional church?

Cardenal : I love the church because it is the community in which I was born and raised. Every community needs a certain amount of institutionalization. But, I feel committed to the church not because it is an institution but because it is a community of Christians. We should all be united in the church.

Cooper : In the United States many are questioning the viability of the church today...

Cardenal : The church today is very different from the church Christ formed. I believe that some day it will be like Christ intended it to be.

Cooper : Yes, perhaps some day. Father Cardenal, given your experiences in both the contemplative and revolutionary life, what do you see ahead for the church from these vantage points.

Cardenal : It is difficult to respond. I don't know, possibly a great division within the church. One part with the powerful and exploiters and the other part with the poor. I don't even think Christ knew what was going to happen to the church. I don't even think he knew if faith would still exist when he came a second time.

Cooper : What do you want North American Christians do understand about life in Nicaragua now?

Cardenal : I hope that they understand the reality in Nicaragua and in Latin America, and not just believe the way things are presented by North American agencies of the press, who often misconstrue. I hope that they understand the revolutionary reality of the situation.

Cooper : What would you like to clarify about the situation?

Cardenal : I would want them to understand revolutionary ideas and what we are fighting for. I want them to understand about the exploitation of the transnational corporations, and that even the United States is a victim of the exploitation of the corporations. Also I would want them to understand the conspiracies of the CIA.

Cooper : Along these lines, do you have a specific hope for the churches in North America as they relate to the revolution in Nicaragua?

Cardenal : Yes, it appears to me that they are the best allies that we have in the United States. I can say that the intellectuals, the students, the liberals are our best allies just like they were for the country of Viet Nam. And from all this group that I mention, the church has to play an important role. I think they can help to defend our cause.

Cooper : How?

Cardenal : By letting people know through their publications that the people are struggling here for justice. And in case there is a military intervention (by the United States) that they would work to inform the public of these things.

Cooper : How is the revolution progressing in Nicaragua?

Cardenal : The revolution is moving ahead with its plans and programs, and with every one, is moving toward justice, even though we still have economic problems. We need time to be able to give to the people the things they

need like education, electricity, health and housing. That takes time. At the present time we are trying to provide the people with schools and some housing.

(Note: In the first year and a half of the new government, the literacy rate climbed from 50% to 90%.)

Cooper : In closing, I would like to ask a question in a different area. Who have been the greatest teachers in your life, and what have they taught you?

Cardenal : In poetry, my teacher was Coronel Urtecho. In the religious life, it was Thomas Merton from whom I learned contemplation. And in my political life, I learned the process of revolution from the Cuban Revolution.

Cooper : Thank you very much for your time, Father Cardenal.

Cardenal : Thank you for coming.

D. Analysis-Reflection

Most of the questions in this interview were answered though undoubtedly there was a disparity between his contemplative revolutionary life in Solentiname and his current life as a political administrator. This disparity may have caused some of his answers to be more brief than I had hoped. Such was the case with the questions concerning the place of contemplation in his life now, during his life as a contemplative in the monastery with Merton, and during the years in Solentiname. He wanted only to mention these times rather than speak about their importance to him.

He also seemed reluctant to speak about the importance of the teachings gained from his mentors.

A significant departure from commitments he held as a contemplative, is the support of armed revolution. An observance I would make is that the times of increased support for armed revolution and a lessened commitment to contemplation seem to be within close proximity.

This is not a critique of the necessity of armed revolution in Nicaragua. (I am not prepared to make such a statement.) For the purpose of this work it is simply an observation that for Cardenal, contemplation and armed revolution (and later political administration) have not integrated well.

I was deeply moved by his reflection on the morality of violence in defense of the innocent "even if that person be himself a criminal", and can only wonder at the depth of his own struggle.

The interview and experience in Nicaragua have raised many additional questions for me. Most of them are contingent with this project such as: What happens to an individual when a radical marginal existence is replaced by a life within the center of a new order? However, these questions are really beyond the limitations of this project and may be addressed at a later time.

We have now had a glimpse at Cardenal; the revolutionary setting into which he was born, the biographical sketch of his life, and the picture of contemplation and revolution as he sees it in his own life. Here is a man born into revolution and called into contemplation.

These two great streams of human history have found their meeting place in more than one person. Some have been mentioned in these pages. Cardenal is their point of interaction for the purpose of this work. How have they come together in this man?

Cardenal's testimony is that contemplation brought him to revolution. Then each mode influenced and grew from the other.

While living as a Trappist, Cardenal saw, through his meditations, the world "as it is", the interdependence of all creation, the pulsating of life through carbon in the sea, human bones and exploding stars. Here he saw forces which exploit and destroy these connections as well. In the monastery was nurtured the desire to create a human system which would take its rightful place in the larger order and movement of the cosmos. The offspring of this desire was the Community in Solentiname, which, while attempting to resist evil, was destroyed.

For Cardenal, contemplation brought vision. Vision brought desire. Desire brought action. And action brought revolution.

Apparent here is that contemplation and revolution are not the same reality. Rather, the same reality unites them and draws them toward their wedding. This reality, according to Cardenal is a radical love.

As with the others who have gone before him, his teacher Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, and Mahatma Gandhi, the

union of contemplation and revolution in Cardenal's life, created a person of great spiritual and social power; centered, creative and committed to the Kingdom of God.

The creation of his own contemplative communal society, the Community of Solentiname is tremendous testimony to the possibilities for such a way of life. There, active resistance to evil was added to the traditional monastic disciplines of prayer, Bible Study and work. Solentiname became world famous for its art and simplicity, and was indeed a community of marginal people committed to spiritual growth and social revolution.

The importance of this integration for the life of the church will be addressed in the following chapter as I bring a final summary statement to the areas of discussion in this work.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

After an introductory chapter, Chapter II presented a description of contemplation and the contemplative life. At that time, characteristics of this life were highlighted with special emphasis given to those characteristics which parallel the revolutionary life. Discussed were: the understanding of call, the place of Love, the vision of the Kingdom of God, a highly evolved moral sensitivity, and the key concept of marginality.

Chapter III presented a description of revolution. Characteristics which were unique to revolution were noted as well as those which paralleled the mystic experience. Unique to the revolutionary life is the sense of immediate need and often a willingness to use violence to resolve that need.

In Chapter IV a comparison was made of contemplative and revolutionary lives. Here, attention was given to the considerable common ground which they share. It was noted that it would not be unlikely for these two to meet as they frequent similar territory and commitments. Also presented were the "problem areas", those characteristics of either contemplation or revolution which may not integrate easily, although it also became obvious that ease may not be an

important factor for integration. This came to light with the observation that the life of the revolutionary, and consequently the movement would be greatly enhanced with the incorporation of times of silence, recollection and solitude.

This chapter concluded with a section on "unique contributions of each mode of life". Highlighted here were the spiritual disciplines of contemplation, its understanding of the human soul and the relationship between humanity and God. Coming from the revolutionaries were the gifts of community organization, a passion for justice and an understanding of political economic structures and their consequences.

The opening sections of Chapter V set the stage for an interview with Father Ernesto Cardenal. We became acquainted with him by reviewing a short history of Nicaragua and a somewhat more lengthy biographical sketch--drawing on his own writings for illustration. After the presentation of the interview, an "analysis-reflection" section brought out questions concerning the areas of tension as well as the areas of hopeful possibility for the integration of these two great streams of human history.

It is now my contention that indeed a disservice has been done to the Christian tradition by separating these two streams. When separated, the limitations which become a part of the definition of each, serve as barriers to the possibility of the deepest in each finding its highest fulfillment.

Having seen what is possible when the two do come together, a valuable critique emerges for the life of the church. Mainstream Christianity, as lived in local churches has, for the most part, manifested neither a mystical nor a revolutionary faith. Rather (at best), the church preaches about what ought to be, that is to say, the Kingdom of God, but is poorly equipped to do the social analysis which would enable it to become aware of the social, political and economic impediments to its coming.

On the local level, the church has made little effort to do the conscientization function which is then left to revolutionaries. This may be due as much to loyalty as to oversight, as the church has become an integral part of the dominant society within which it resides. Its values, lifestyle, programs and commitments are almost indistinguishable from those of the society which surrounds it. Perhaps because, at one level, the conflict between the Kingdom and the church's dominant community is indeed understood, there is little discussion of the Kingdom of God. Consequently, the church has little notion of direction or purpose. And, therefore even less idea of what may be asked of us at this time, as preparation for the fulfillment of that time. Finally, because there is such minimal understanding of the task of our time, there is lacking any sense of support for those risking changes in their lives as attempts toward faithfulness to the biblical witness.

The church, I feel, has a desperate need to reevaluate its positions (geographically as well as theologically) and its purpose.

How did this happen? One of the key factors is at the heart of the problem presented by this project. The proposal I would make is that the mind-body, spirit-flesh, religion-politics dualisms which have been developed in western societies may be a key not only to our separation of contemplation and revolution but also to our inability to understand the nature of the reality they share.

This is an important awareness for the church to possess. Once we reunderstand that "The calcium in our bodies is the same calcium that we find in the sea...and both the calcium of our body and that of the sea derive from heaven, from the calcium that is contained in the stars and that floats in the interstellar oceans"...and that "in the body of Christ, as in our own body" is incarnate the entire cosmos, we will understand the context within which decisions must be made, purposes understood, and actions taken.

Nothing less will suffice, nor would it be honest. There is a certain intimacy in the cosmos. This must be known.

The connection between contemplation and revolution is also at the very center of our being. Contemplation leads one, through an incredible journey, to this center, to the innermost depth of the human spirit. It is at this point that the traveller experiences what the mystics call

"the link with Reality". The process of contemplation leads one to an inner passageway which is the meeting place of soul and universe. Here, passing through, re-formation occurs and revolutionaries are born.¹

At this point it must also be said that the passage may be approached from the other side as well. The personality and "nervous organization" of an individual may bring one to the passage first as a revolutionary, or a mystic. The journey in either direction is equally rich.

There is now a final observation which I would like to bring forth from the body of this work. It has become evident to me that those persons who have embraced both contemplation and revolution, have also embraced a third discipline. The discipline of non-violence. This appears to be indispensable. An individual may, of course, be an armed revolutionary, but not an armed contemplative. The demise of the prayer life seems to coincide with the taking up of arms. Those of us outside active revolutionary situations can only begin to understand the nature of their gravity.

But, perhaps by being aware of the severity of the sacrifice (the loss or at the very least, the lessing of contemplation) made by the contemplative who feels the necessity of armed revolution, we may understand a little more.

¹Revolutionary consciousness may also grow through a gradual educational/reflection process. The point made here is that it is a part of an authentic encounter with God.

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